

**Remarks Following the Swearing-In  
of Gaddi H. Vasquez as Director of  
the Peace Corps**

*February 15, 2002*

Thank you very much. Welcome to the White House.

When America was attacked on September the 11th, they thought our country would splinter into fear and selfishness. They thought we'd fall apart. They thought we didn't have any fiber or character. Instead, we've seen extraordinary acts of courage and compassion and a renewed dedication to service. A spirit of sacrifice and service gave birth to the Peace Corps more than 40 years ago. We needed the Peace Corps then, and we need the Peace Corps today.

My administration strongly supports the Peace Corps, and we're increasing our commitment to it. That starts by finding somebody who can serve ably as the Director. I have found such a man. I was honored to swear Gaddi in, in the Oval Office—or watch his swearing-in today in the Oval Office, and I know he'll do a superb job in leading this important organization.

Thank you for leaving your beloved California. Thank you for your sacrifice. And welcome to an administration that wants to do right by the Peace Corps.

I also want to thank Elaine for your sacrifice, as well. I know it's hard to pull up your family and head east, but it's the right thing to do. It's the right thing to do to serve your country. And I'm so honored both of you all have come. And Jason, thank you for being here, as well, to support your dad.

I want to thank the first Peace Corps Director, who joined us today. I can't thank you enough, Sargent Shriver, for taking time out of your busy schedule to show up here to see this good man assume this important office. We're honored with your presence. We appreciate your service to the country, and thank you for coming.

And we've got another former Director here today, too, a lady who serves in my Cabinet as the Secretary of Labor. She's doing a fabulous job there, just like she did for the Peace Corps, and that's Elaine Chao. Thank you for coming, Elaine.

And Gaddi was such a big draw that he got another member of my Cabinet here, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, Mel Martinez. Thanks for coming, Mel. I appreciate your being here.

Two Members of the United States House of Representatives have joined us: Gaddi's Congressman, Chris Cox—thank you for coming, Chris; I appreciate you being here—and a former volunteer, Tom Petri from Wisconsin. Thank you for coming.

We hear from a lot of Members of Congress about the importance of the Peace Corps but no more clear voice about that than Chris Dodd, the Senator from Connecticut. I look forward to working with Chris to implement our mutual vision for making sure the Peace Corps fulfills its mission and hope.

And speaking about that, I want to thank all the people who work at the Peace Corps, those who work there now, those who have been volunteers in the past, are current volunteers. We're honored that you serve our Nation, and you're welcome here in the White House, and thank you for coming.

And finally, I think it's a great tribute to the Peace Corps that we've got a lot of members from the ambassadorial corps who are here. I want to thank you all for coming and taking your time. You understand the importance of the Peace Corps, and your presence here is a confirmation of its importance. And so we welcome you. Thank you for coming.

For more than 40 years, the Peace Corps has sent Americans to serve their country by serving the world. America has a new kind of force today. I mean, we're not only a great country, a great economic engine, and obviously a great military, we're a great idea. The greatness of the country is in the values we believe in, freedom and hope and opportunity. We're a nation founded on just valuable principles. And the power of the idea cannot and will not be stopped at our borders.

The Peace Corps volunteers carry the American idea with them. They don't carry our culture; they carry universal values and principles that are so incredibly important for all of mankind. Peace Corps volunteers contribute in unaccountable ways to the countries to which they're assigned. They not only

teach reading, English language skills; they introduce new business and farming methods, help spark economic development, promote training and modern technology, help fight the spread of HIV/AIDS and infectious diseases. They make an incredibly important contribution to our fellow mankind.

You know, because we come from a society where women can be leaders, where people speak and worship freely, where the difference is a source of our strength, not a cause of war, a Peace Corps volunteer in the very life they live helps spread important values. Just the fact that somebody comes from a country that is so open, that in itself is an incredibly positive influence on the world.

You know, the war has thrust upon us an enemy who hates every good—everything the Peace Corps stands for. We long for peace in America. We've got to remember, we're fighting an enemy that really can't stand the values spread by the Peace Corps, which means that the Peace Corps must be reinvigorated. The Peace Corps, itself, stands for what we fight for. And if we weren't to understand the role, if we were to shrink in our obligations, if we were not to allow the Peace Corps to expand, we would be doing exactly what the terrorists want us to do. And we're not going to let them cause us to abandon what we hold dear.

I have called for twice as many Peace Corps volunteers over the next 5 years, to return the Peace Corps to the strength it had in the midsixties. Those new volunteers will be heading out to new destinations. They'll be returning to the republics of central Asia. And within 3 weeks, a team will leave for Afghanistan, to address how the Peace Corps can assist that country in reconstruction. The Peace Corps is committed to returning to Peru and to sending volunteers to East Timor, which will soon become the first country to gain independence in the 21st century. The Peace Corps will also explore ways to assist the governments of Azerbaijan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Botswana, and Chad, and Swaziland. And during my upcoming trip to Asia, I will explore with Chinese officials the possibility of an expansion of the Peace Corps program into China.

And when these volunteers return home, they can also help educate Americans about

the countries in which they serve. My administration has created what's called the USA Freedom Corps, to encourage citizens to give at least 2 years of their life to service to their country. And the Peace Corps is a vital part of this effort.

For Americans looking for service opportunities at home or abroad, they can find those opportunities in the USA Freedom Corps. If you're interested in the Peace Corps, get on the Web—on your computer and dial up the USA Freedom Corps Web page, which is [usafreedomcorps.gov](http://usafreedomcorps.gov), or just pick up your telephone and dial 877-USA-CORPS. If you want to know about the opportunities the Peace Corps offers, call that number or get on the Web page. And we will help you serve our fellow mankind.

You know, when President Kennedy, Sargent Shriver's brother-in-law, signed an Executive order more than 40 years ago providing for the establishing of the Peace Corps, he spoke about a nation of men and women anxious to sacrifice their energies and time and toil to the cause of world peace and human progress. That mission hasn't changed. As a matter of fact, today the mission is needed more than ever.

I look forward to working with the Members of Congress to strengthen the Peace Corps, to reassert its independence, and to create new opportunities in other nations, as well as the ones I mentioned—new opportunities in Muslim nations for us to spread the good story about the values, the universal values, we hold so dear.

I believe Americans are still willing to sacrifice for causes greater than themselves. And the Peace Corps offers such a fantastic opportunity to do so. Gaddi Vasquez understands this, as well. And so it's with pleasure I introduce the newly sworn-in Director of the Peace Corps to the American people.

May God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:12 p.m. in Presidential Hall in the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to Elaine Vasquez, wife of Gaddi H. Vasquez, and their son Jason Vasquez.

**Letter to Congressional Leaders  
Recommending the Yucca Mountain  
Site for the Disposal of Spent  
Nuclear Fuel and Nuclear Waste**

*February 15, 2002*

*Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. President:)*

In accordance with section 114 of the Nuclear Waste Policy Act of 1982, 42 U.S.C. 10134 (the "Act"), the Secretary of Energy has recommended approval of the Yucca Mountain site for the development at that site of a repository for the geologic disposal of spent nuclear fuel and high level nuclear waste from the Nation's defense activities. As is required by the Act, the Secretary has also submitted to me a comprehensive statement of the basis of his recommendation.

Having received the Secretary's recommendation and the comprehensive statement of the basis of it, I consider the Yucca Mountain site qualified for application for a construction authorization for a repository. Therefore, I now recommend the Yucca Mountain site for this purpose. In accordance with section 114 of the Act, I am transmitting with this recommendation to the Congress a copy of the comprehensive statement of the basis of the Secretary's recommendation prepared pursuant to the Act. The transmission of this document triggers an expedited process described in the Act. I urge the Congress to undertake any necessary legislative action on this recommendation in an expedited and bipartisan fashion.

Proceeding with the repository program is necessary to protect public safety, health, and the Nation's security because successful completion of this project would isolate in a geologic repository at a remote location highly radioactive materials now scattered throughout the Nation. In addition, the geologic repository would support our national security through disposal of nuclear waste from our defense facilities.

A deep geologic repository, such as Yucca Mountain, is important for our national security and our energy future. Nuclear energy is the second largest source of U.S. electricity generation and must remain a major component of our national energy policy in the years to come. The cost of nuclear power compares favorably with the costs of elec-

tricity generation by other sources, and nuclear power has none of the emissions associated with coal and gas power plants.

This recommendation, if it becomes effective, will permit commencement of the next rigorous stage of scientific and technical review of the repository program through formal licensing proceedings before the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. Successful completion of this program also will redeem the clear Federal legal obligation safely to dispose of commercial spent nuclear fuel that the Congress passed in 1982.

This recommendation is the culmination of two decades of intense scientific scrutiny involving application of an array of scientific and technical disciplines necessary and appropriate for this challenging undertaking. It is an undertaking that was mandated twice by the Congress when it legislated the obligations that would be redeemed by successful pursuit of the repository program. Allowing this recommendation to come into effect will enable the beginning of the next phase of intense scrutiny of the project necessary to assure the public health, safety, and security in the area of Yucca Mountain, and also to enhance the safety and security of the Nation as a whole.

Sincerely,

**George W. Bush**

NOTE: Letters were sent to J. Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Richard B. Cheney, President of the Senate. An original was not available for verification of the content of this letter.

---

**Digest of Other  
White House Announcements**

---

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

---

**February 10**

In the morning, the President and Mrs. Bush returned from Jackson Hole, WY, to Washington, DC.